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ABSTRACT

This tongue-in-cheek paper represents that ideal and fictitious being, "Joe Personnel", as envisioned by critics of regularly-organized student personnel services. They contend that, since people have, for centuries, handled their own problems, they should be capable of doing so today, and that any assistance needed can be provided by a single campus functionary, "Joe Personnel". "Joe" is expected to combine the devotion of James Conant, the enthusiasm and wit of Bob Hope, the knowledge of Don Super and Carl Rogers, and the compassion of Albert Schweitzer--in short, he must be Socrates, Christ and Dear Abby rolled into one. His need to function constantly and mechanically in behalf of all the students on campus wears him out so that he dies at an early age, declaring his wish to be buried deep, with "the computer at his feet, the typewriter over his empty heart cavity, and the telephone at his head." "Tell the Administration," wails Joe's epitaph, "they're why I'm dead." (Author/CJ)

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They're Why I'm Dead

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The value and role of college student personnel services have been questioned repeatedly by educational administrators and other critics since the inception of the first organized personnel services at Harvard in 1890. The numerous critics contend that their arguments in opposition to expand student personnel services rest upon historical evidence. These critics contend that since most people have taken care of their individual needs for the past several thousand years, no good reason exists that should prevent them from continuing to do so. They further contend that the burgeoning complexity of today's academic institutions is no cause for a major policy change now. These "men of reason" maintain that one MAN can handle a campus' need for personnel services, should that need arise.

Having encountered for some time, assertions that one MAN is capable of taking care of most student personnel services at the college level, one might dream about a mythical "Joe Personnel" and the superhuman abilities he would possess if he were to perform all the tasks expected of him.

As envisioned, "Joe" must have the devotion to the educational process of James Conant and the enthusiasm and ready wit of Bob Hope. His understanding of student personnel services must be that of Ed Williamson, and his ability to organize disorganized chaos must be that of Rube Goldberg. He must have Don Super's knowledge of vocational theory and, because he is always on the run, "Joe" must possess the swiftness of Jim Ryun. George Romney's ability to direct housing and Albert Schweitzer's

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compassion to administer medical needs would be included in the capabilities of "Joe Personnel". He must possess Amy Vanderbilt's knowledge in organizing social functions and his proficiency in counseling must equal that of Carl Rogers.

Because of the diversity of these many skills, "Joe" must possess the memory, the efficiency, and the unquestioned accuracy of a computer, plus the physical stamina and endurance of "Broadway Joe". He will have to be Socrates, Christ, and Dear Abby embodied in one person.

As "Joe" comes into clear focus, one can see that he is in a state of perpetual motion for he must be everywhere at once. As he comes closer, it can be seen that he looks haggard and disheveled, resembling a hippie for he has little time to spend on his personal appearance. A strange discoloration is in "Joe's" eyes; closer examination discloses that dollar signs are whirling around in the iris. These are the results of the installation of his "eye-b.m." computer, which enables him to keep constant account of all the money involved in his services. "Joe's" hands are a bit unusual; however, these strange attachments are necessary if he is to fill out the numerous forms that come to his attention every day. Too, they aid "Joe" in operating the cash register-calculator which was recently transplanted into the cavity left vacant by the removal of a little-used organ -- his heart. Small protrusions extend from "Joe's" ears; however they are nothing more than tiny telephones that are run on impulses from the brain and allow him to maintain constant contact with all areas of the campus. The compartments on his sleeves hold prescriptions and first-aid supplies which he might need should he have to treat a student who becomes ill. The large

basket strapped to his head holds the decorations for the homecoming dance, and the mini-cash register attached to the front of his shirt contains ready cash for an emergency loan to a poor indigent student. The strong physique, slightly armored against blows incurred as "Joe" performs the unenviable tasks of peacemaker among dissident groups representing administrators, students, regents, and the public, has begun to show signs of wear and tear.

Alas, the heavy burdens carried by "Joe Personnel" must inevitably take their toll. Any well-built machine will eventually break down. The "Wonderful One Hoss Shay", "Old Ironsides", and "Casey Jones" went the way of all material things. Overwork is no respecter of age, race, religion, sex, or creed.

Something is happening! Smoke is pouring from "Joe's" eyes as if the computer has blown a fuse; sparks are flying from his ears as if a circuit is shorting out. The cash register is regurgitating dollar bills; the basket of decorations is beginning to droop. "Joe" is falling! He is collapsing into a yawning hole! All is still, except for what seems to be a recording that sounds like the voice of a very old and tired man, not a man of 32 as "Joe's" identification card shows. It really must be his grandfather's voice -- no, the voice identifies itself as that of "Joe Personnel", making a final request:

"Friends, critics, administrators,

Lend me your ear. I have none, you see.

I ask not for praise, but for my heart.

I was an honorable man, a friend to all I met, so --

When I die, bury me deep.

Place the computer at my feet.

Place the typewriter over my empty heart,

And tell the surgeons they did their part.

Place the cash register in my hand;

Tell the accountant I could never understand.

Place the telephone at my head,

And tell the Administration,

They're why I'm dead."

These were the final words of "Joe Personnel", as he sank into an open grave -- which he had dug, no doubt, during some of his free time!!!

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